



San Diego City Attorney Jan I. Goldsmith

NEWS RELEASE

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Multiple Hit-and-Run Driver Pleads Guilty *Man impaired by meth, drugs damaged five cars in 2014 Pacific Beach rampage*

A hit-and-run driver who damaged five cars during a collision-filled rampage in Pacific Beach pled guilty today to driving under the influence of drugs.

Jon Michael Richards, 27, was arrested on February 11, 2014, after a hit-and-run spree that was witnessed by scores of people in busy lunch-hour traffic.

Over the course of 17 minutes, Richards:

- ran a red light on Grand Avenue and hit his first victim's car in the intersection. That car spun out and hit another car, and Richards fled the scene, leaving behind one of his car bumpers bearing his license plate;
- rear-ended a second vehicle at a red light at 1800 Garnet Avenue while police were investigating the first collision. Witnesses said Richards was speeding and did not slow down. The driver of the car he rear-ended told Richards to follow him to a nearby parking lot, so they could exchange insurance information, but instead Richards drove around the accident scene and fled; and then
- hit a parked car in the 2700 block of Garnet Avenue from behind, reversed, drove against traffic, sideswiped another car, and fled the scene.

Pursued by witnesses, Richards drive to his residence in the De Anza Cove Mobile Home Park. When police found him outside his mobile home, Richards initially claimed he had no involvement in the accidents. Only after being identified by several witnesses did he admit he was the driver.

As they interviewed Richards, officers noted that he was slurring his speech and mumbling, swaying and staggering, and that, while he was agitated and had an elevated pulse rate, he nodded off when placed in a patrol car. He admitted to having taken Klonopin and "some blue pills" earlier.

Blood tests subsequently showed high levels of methamphetamine and Clonazepam, the nervous system depressant marketed as Klonopin and prescribed for people suffering from panic attacks and epilepsy.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy City Attorney Taylor Garrot, who specializes in Drugged Driving cases under federally funded grant administered by the California Office of Traffic Safety.

Garrot has successfully prosecuted cases in which drivers were under the influence of such drugs as methamphetamine and cocaine; painkillers such as ketamine, antidepressants such as Seroquel; opiates, including morphine, codeine, heroin and hydrocodone; and benzodiazepines, such as Ativan, Valium and Xanax.

Richards was sentenced to 120 days in a residential treatment program and five years' probation, and fined \$2,133. Restitution rights were reserved for all of his victims.

The City Attorney's Office receives all misdemeanor DUI arrest reports occurring within Poway, 4-S Ranch and the City of San Diego, except its South Bay communities. Garrot works with the State's Traffic Safety Resource Protector Program to expand knowledge and resources in the office and throughout the county through training programs with law enforcement personnel.

The San Diego City Attorney's Office has a conviction rate of more than 99 percent when it prosecutes DUI cases, but prosecution techniques are not yet as sophisticated for Drugged Driving cases as they are for ones where alcohol is the sole factor. The City Attorney's Office is fast becoming a leader in prosecution techniques for these cases due, in large part, to the work being done under the federal grant.

"Taylor's expertise in prosecuting these cases helps not only our office, but other law enforcement agencies deal with the growing problem of drug-impaired driving," City Attorney Jan Goldsmith said. **"Each year our county experiences thousands of serious injuries and deaths caused by motorists impaired by drugs and alcohol, and his work is keeping dangerous drivers off our streets."**

The \$263,000 grant comes from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.